

Speak up & be heard

CONSUMER REGISTER lists summaries of major consumer proposals before Federal agencies. If you wish to submit written comments, include your name & address, state the name & *Federal Register* citation of the proposal on which you are commenting and explain your views briefly & clearly. Although comments should reach agencies by the deadline, some agencies will consider comments received a few days late. When in doubt about your comments reaching Washington by the deadline, mail them anyway.

Nylon

Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has removed 2 new synthetic fibers made by E. I. duPont de Nemours & Co. from its nylon classification & has placed them in a new classification called aramid.

FTC decided that aramid & nylon differ significantly from each other in chemical structure & properties & therefore should carry different generic names.

Consumers, therefore, may soon be seeing & hearing references to the new aramid fibers being sold under the following names:

- Nomex, which is used for clothing & household goods;

- Fiber B, which is used for tires.

This classification became effective Jan. 10.

Details—*Federal Register*: Dec. 11, 1973, page 34112.

Air bags

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has amended its occupant crash protection labeling requirements. The amendment became effective Jan. 10.

The amendment eliminates the previously required monthly maintenance schedule for air bags ("crash deployed occupant protection systems") & sets the schedule instead by reference to car mileage & date & year the car was made.

Cars equipped with air bags must carry a description of how the air bag system operates along with maintenance & car instructions that are permanently fastened inside the car. The information must also be included in the owner's manual if one is provided.

The instructions are to be phrased in typical warranty terms that are familiar to consumers such as "Check transmission fluid every miles."

Details—*Federal Register*: Jan. 10, page 1513; Oct. 24, 1973, page 29341.

Swine blood

Agriculture Dept. is now permitting the use of swine blood in certain meat products, such as blood pudding & blood sausage.

Until today swine blood had not been permitted in any packaged meat products since Agriculture's decision against it in 1967. The department banned its use because no sanitary method of collecting the blood was available. Agriculture expects this change in regulations to be an incentive to processors to develop acceptable sanitary collection methods. Agriculture will have to approve methods before they are used.

In 1971 Agriculture asked for & received comments on its proposal to permit the use of swine blood in food

products. Most of the persons opposing its use did so on religious grounds. However, consumers will not have to worry about whether blood will be part of the product they buy: The presence of blood must be stated in the name of the product, & the list of ingredients on the label must specify the kind of blood used, such as "beef blood" or "swine blood."

The change in regulations should particularly benefit consumers in certain parts of the country—such as Hawaii—where swine blood is an ingredient in some specialty foods.

Details—*Federal Register*: Jan. 16, page 1973; Aug. 20, 1971, page 16194.

Toys

Feb. 22 is deadline for comments on Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) proposal to amend its regulations covering the labeling of electric toys & other electric articles intended for children's use. CPSC is also proposing a change in the type of power cords that may be used.

In March 1973 Bureau of Product Safety (which existed before CPSC started operations in May 1973) banned electrically operated toys & other articles for use by children if they did not meet certain safety requirements.

CPSC is proposing these amendments as a result of suggestions by Toy Manufacturers of America Inc. (TMA). The proposal would:

- Require precautionary labeling in front of all the other written material contained in the instruction booklets or sheets. (Present regulations designate placing the warning labels on the upper right-hand corner of the principal display panel—the front of a label or package. TMA says the booklets or sheets do not have principal display panels.)

- Permit hand-held hobby products, such as wood-burning tools, to use flexible electrical power cords (Type SPT-1). (Present regulations specify the less flexible "type SP-2, or its equivalent, or a heavier general-use type." TMA says that a toy or article can be placed on a flat surface more easily without tipping upward if the more flexible SPT-1 type is used.)

Details—*Federal Register*: Jan. 23, page 2611. Send comments to Secretary, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC 20207.

Frozen apple juice

Feb. 28 is deadline for comments on Agriculture Dept.'s second proposal to issue new grade standards for frozen concentrated apple juice for voluntary use by producers.

At present there are no U.S. standards for any grade of frozen concentrated apple juice. American Frozen Foods Institute (AFFI) asked Agriculture to establish standards,

& in 1972 Agriculture set up an apple marketing team to study the matter.

Because apples vary greatly in sugar content & acidity—depending on variety & where they are grown—Agriculture is revising its original proposal to adjust for these & other differences. This adjustment is being made in response to comments on the first proposal, which was published in Aug. 1973.

In addition, the proposal would establish standards for 3 grades of frozen concentrated apple juice: "U.S. Grade A" or "U.S. Fancy," "U.S. Grade B" or "U.S. Choice" & "Substandard." To qualify for the "U.S. Grade A" classification, the reconstituted apple juice would have to have the following qualities:

- Good color & clarity (bright, transparent & golden);
- Practically free from defects (relatively free from sediment, dark specks & other defects that affect appearance);
- Good flavor & aroma (fruity flavor & aroma).

Details—*Federal Register*: Jan. 16, page 2006; Aug. 20, 1973, page 22406. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Agriculture Dept., Washington, DC 20250.

Windshield mountings

March 4 is deadline for comments on National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) proposal to extend requirements of its windshield retention standard to buses, light trucks & multipurpose passenger vehicles (MPVs)—such as recreational vehicles—that weigh 10,000 pounds or less.

A multipurpose vehicle is defined as a motor-driven vehicle, designed to carry 10 persons or less, which is constructed either on a truck chassis or with special features for occasional off-road operation such as most campers.

NHTSA says that since MPVs, light trucks & buses are commonly used as "second" cars on the highway, their windshields should be fastened just as securely as the windshields for regular cars.

A windshield is made with a layer of plastic laminated between 2 sheets of glass. Although the glass may break in a crash, the plastic keeps the windshield from falling apart. However, if the windshield is not fastened or mounted properly, it—plastic & glass—can separate from the vehicle. When the windshield remains substantially mounted in place during a crash, the windshield prevents passengers from being thrown out of the vehicle headfirst.

MPVs, buses & trucks would have to pass the same windshield mounting test that is required of cars. In the test, when a car crashes at 30 miles per hour with a dummy in it, the windshield must be retained in such a way as to prevent the dummy from being thrown out of the car.

Details—*Federal Register*: Jan. 18, page 2274. Send comments to Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Administration, 400 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20590.

Air conditioner efficiency

March 4 is deadline for comments on Commerce Dept.'s proposal for manufacturers to voluntarily test & label window-unit air conditioners for energy efficiency.

The proposal states that air conditioners would be tested & certified for cooling capacity & electrical power requirements. The cooling capacity—expressed in terms of "btu per hour"—would then be divided by the electrical power requirement—expressed in "watts"—to give the "energy efficiency ratio," called the EER.

Thus, an air conditioner with an electrical power need of 860 watts & a cooling capacity of 8,000 btu's has an EER of 9.3.

Consequently, an air conditioner that requires just as many watts as another, but has a higher cooling capacity, will have a higher EER & will cool more effectively.

This & other information would be contained on a label attached to or hung on the air conditioning unit itself. The label would be separate from any other manufacturer's information. Certification would be done by an independent research organization.

Other pertinent information to be included on the label would be:

- Range of EER's for models in each air conditioning unit's category. For example, in the 8,000 to 8,999 class of window units, the range is 5.8 to 9.9 EER.

- Range of EER's for models in the classes above & below the model tested. This means that the ranges of EER's for 7,000 to 7,999 Btu's & for 9,000 to 9,999 Btu's would be shown.

- Manufacturer & model number.
- Electrical power requirement & the current voltage.
- Notice to the consumer to ask the dealer for Commerce Dept.'s booklet *Room Air Conditioner Efficiency* (which explains how to select correct cooling capacity, how to estimate cost of electricity & how to use the air conditioner more effectively).

- Certification seal of the organization certifying the air conditioner & the Commerce Dept.'s energy conservation symbol.

Details—*Federal Register*: Jan. 31, page 3982; June 5, 1973, page 14756. CONSUMER REGISTER: June 15, 1973. Send comments to Assistant Secretary for Science & Technology, Commerce Dept., Washington, DC 20230.

Auto insurance rates

Insurance companies may not increase their automobile insurance rates during the 60-day period that began Jan. 17. Cost of Living Council (CLC) is applying the special ruling to accident insurance for all private cars & commercial vehicles.

CLC took this action because of the restrictions imposed on drivers as a result of the energy crisis, such as reduced speed limits & gasoline shortages.

A study is being made by the insurance industry & National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) to decide what effects these restrictions will have on auto accident fatalities. The results will be considered in insurance rate determinations at the end of the 60-day period.

Twelve insurance companies have already announced dividend & refund plans for automobile policyholders because of decreases in highway death statistics. [See Briefly in this issue of CONSUMERS NEWS.]

Details—*Federal Register*: Jan. 22, page 2467.

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